California Public Utilities Commission Work Plan 2003

Introduction

This Work Plan generally describes the work the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) expects to accomplish during 2003. It is provided pursuant to Public Utilities (PU) Code §321.6 and §321.7 and is intended to provide the highlights of the work the CPUC will undertake this year to the Governor, Legislature, and public. It describes agency objectives and priorities.

Access to background information on the CPUC and current information about the CPUC formal proceedings, its daily calendar of proceedings, Commission meetings, decisions, programs, and public participation hearings, and how the public can arrange through our Public Advisor's Office to participate in proceedings is available on the CPUC Internet website: http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/. A list of current and anticipated formal proceedings of broad public interest is provided as an attachment to this document.

Criteria for Determining Regulatory Priorities

The CPUC's fundamental objective is to assure fair and reasonable utility prices, and reliable, high quality essential services. CPUC actions are driven by the belief that the provision of reliable and reasonably priced utility services is essential to the health of the California economy, the health and well-being of the population, and a high quality of life for all Californians. Within this objective, the Commission allocates its staff resources for decisionmaking in accordance with a stated set of priorities established by the President. When establishing its priorities and objectives the Commission considers:

Law – the CPUC sets priorities to assure compliance with and enforcement of the law; where needed, the CPUC may advocate changes in the law.

Interests of the Public – the CPUC puts the interests of the public at large and the State of California ahead of any single entity or constituency consistent with statute.

Dollars at stake – the CPUC sets priorities considering the amount of money at stake and its impacts on consumers and the state's economy.

Vulnerability of target groups – the CPUC places a higher priority on promoting the interests of the public, the State of California and consumers than on arbitrating disputes between regulated service providers; CPUC addresses issues affecting captive consumers ahead of consumers of services available from a variety of providers, and considers the needs of consumers who are most vulnerable ahead of those who are sophisticated.

¹ PU Code section 305 assigns this responsibility. *CPUC Work Plan 2003*

Number affected – the CPUC sets priorities considering the number of consumers and businesses affected.

Importance of the service, product or policy – in setting priorities, the CPUC considers the importance of the service, product or policy to the welfare of the state and its consumers; generally, the CPUC addresses issues related to essential services (i.e basic telephone service) ahead of nonessential services (i.e. repeat dialing service).

Degree of monopoly characteristics present – the CPUC addresses problems with industries and services with monopoly characteristics ahead of those that have some degree of competitive characteristic.

"Bang for the Buck" – because the agency does not have the resources to address every issue, the CPUC must set priorities by evaluating the relative costs and benefits of acting or not acting.

ELECTRICITY

The CPUC regulates privately-owned electric utilities, which serve about 80% of the load in California. California will continue its energy crisis recovery throughout 2003. The CPUC will focus its electricity efforts on:

- > Reinvigorating the Obligation to Serve
- ➤ Infrastructure Development to Meet Our Objectives for Reliable Service that is Reasonably-priced and Sensitive to the Environment
- Sustaining Ongoing Consumer Protections and Programs for Low-Income and Other Vulnerable Customer Groups

These efforts will include collaboration and cooperative efforts among our sister agencies with energy responsibilities, the Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (CEC) and Consumer Power and Conservation Financing Authority (CPA), and the quasi-governmental Independent System Operator. The *Energy Action Plan* efforts, already underway, demonstrate the CPUC's commitment to collaborate on key energy actions, which are also reflected in this workplan.²

The CPUC will also pursue these efforts as the state's representative of the people before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the courts.³

The CPUC is Committed to Reinvigorating the Obligation to Serve.

California, like many states, has a long tradition of upholding the investor-owned utilities' duty to serve all customers within their franchised service territories.

Rehabilitating the creditworthiness of Southern California Edison Company (SCE)

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² The *Draft Energy Action Plan* was published for comment and a joint hearing of the state agencies was held. It is currently under revision in light of public comment. Copies may be obtained from the CPUC web page at http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/static/_spotlight/energy+action+plan.htm. Written comments and a copy of the hearing transcript are also available at that location.

³ The CPUC is designated in statute as the state's representative at FERC and works closely with the state's Electricity Oversight Board on subjects the Board also has authority to address pursuant to its enabling statute.

and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is the first, and necessary step to sustaining their ability to provide energy to their customers.

In response to their credit situations, PG&E and SCE sued the CPUC in federal court to force a ratemaking regime that would pass through all wholesale cost whether or not just and reasonable. In a **CPUC/SCE Settlement**, the CPUC has resolved its federal court dispute with SCE on a basis that permits SCE to pay off its creditors and restore its cash and credit positions over time. PG&E filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. The **PG&E Bankruptcy** filing proposed a Plan of Reorganization (POR) that would disaggregate its utility; the CPUC POR preserves the integrated utility operation and state oversight while rehabilitating PG&E's credit and resolving the federal litigation. During 2003 the CPUC will continue to argue against the PG&E POR, support its own POR and, with the court's permission, implement its plan of reorganization.

The CPUC will review the going-forward revenue needs of San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E), Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), SCE and PG&E in **General Rate Case applications**.⁵ These reviews will be comprehensive and will establish the relationship between the rates the utilities are paid and the services they deliver, as well as establishing standards for the quality of delivery service for the major California utilities. They will be time and resource intensive.

A settled approach to the relationship between the Department of Water Resources and the investor-owned utilities is important to demonstrating stability to the financial community. DWR is statutorily required to file with the CPUC annually **DWR revenue needs** to support its bonds and operating costs, so the CPUC anticipates receiving such a filing in 2003. The CPUC has a 120-day review and approval period to establish the share of DWR revenue needs to be born by each IOU's customers. In addition, the CPUC has entered orders prescribing the **operational relationship** between DWR and the utilities covering billing and remittance of revenues to DWR, and the day-to-day operation of the DWR long term contracts the CPUC allocated to the IOUs. The CPUC will adjust and refine these orders through 2003 to assure that the relationships function properly.

⁴ The CPUC/SCE settlement agreement was approved by the Federal District Court in October 2001. The Settlement was appealed, and the Ninth Circuit Court issued an opinion in September 2002 that raised substantial question as to whether the settlement violated state law, both in substance and by the procedure the CPUC used to agree to it. The Ninth Circuit Court has certified questions to the California Supreme Court for review; and the California Supreme Court has accepted the case (S110662).
⁵ SCE requests an \$896 million increase over its \$2.8 billion revenue requirement in 2003. (See A.02-05-004, I.02-06-002.) PG&E requests an electric revenue increase of \$598 million and a gas revenue increase of \$105 million over its 2003 revenue requirements of \$2.118 billion electric and \$895 million gas. (See A.02-11-017.) SDG&E requests a \$59 million electric revenue increase and a \$22 million gas revenue increase. (See A.02-12-028.) SoCalGas requests an increase of \$130 million. (See A.02-12-027.) The CPUC will also be evaluating the SCE Application to Reduce Rates. SCE has asked that a portion of the 2001 rate increase the CPUC imposed be removed for non-residential customers. (See A.02-05-046.) The CPUC's review of these requests include reviewing the costs of, and rates for, energy and for improving the competitive opportunities for state agriculture and other rural energy consumers.

A stable and reasonable wholesale market is also key to reinvigorating the IOUs' obligation to serve and financial ability to meet that obligation. Independent System Operator tariff reforms and the reconstruction of a wholesale market mechanism by the FERC via its Standard Market Design rulemaking and review of the ISO reforms are essential components of this effort. Another component of this effort is the CPUC Generator Operation and Maintenance Standards Rulemaking, where the PUC will establish rules to enforce the ISO outage scheduling protocols and implement and enforce standards pursuant to Senate Bill X2 39. This effort should protect Californians against future manipulation of the availability of power

Finalizing the **cost responsibility surcharge** to be borne by direct access customers is important for utility financial stability, and their ability to meet their obligation to serve. The surcharge captures the portion of historic and ongoing, above market generation costs to be born by direct access customers. The CPUC is on schedule to implement a final cost responsibility surcharge by July 1. The CPUC proceedings and decisions will be shaped by legislative action, including the Legislature's directive to suspend direct access (contained in ABX1 1 effective February 1, 2001).

Infrastructure Development is Key to Reliable Service that is Reasonablypriced and Sensitive to the Environment.

The CPUC will continue its efforts to ensure California's investor-owned utility electric infrastructure is ready to meet a growing economy in a manner that is both cost-effective and environmentally sound. In our **Procurement Proceeding**, the CPUC will evaluate the IOUs' resource portfolios, considering the right balance among energy efficiency, transmission improvements, distributed generation, utility generation, ownership and contracting for resources, that best serve California. In that proceeding, the CPUC will also implement the **renewable portfolio standard**, identifying a target level for renewables in the state's overall generation portfolio, describing mechanisms for its acquisition, and authorizing purchases from renewable generation facilities. Together with the California Energy Commission-administered supplemental energy payments, these resources will cost-effectively diversify California's resource mix.

In 2003, the CPUC will continue to fund approximately \$315 million in energy efficiency programs that help Californians use less energy. The CPUC will assess and implement dynamic pricing programs to reduce and shift load away from high cost hours of the day. The CPUC will perform volume sensitive rate design, setting the residential volume allowance that is charged the lowest rate – the baseline – taking into consideration household characteristics, climate, household well water pumping, and definitions of seasons. Establishing the regulatory framework and administrative responsibilities for energy efficiency programs is critical, and will be pursued by the CPUC in 2003.

California's dynamic economy also requires that its transmission grid evolve as population grows and shifts and industries develop, locate and relocate. With input from the ISO, CEC, and stakeholders, the CPUC will continue in 2003 to **identify and prioritize review of the potential transmission construction projects**. The CPUC has before it certification proceedings for several major transmission

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improvements that will be evaluated in 2003, including Path 15 (PG&E), a \$400 million upgrade of an existing line that transmits power between the SCE and PG&E service territories, Jefferson-Martin (PG&E), a \$175 million new transmission line to bring power up the San Francisco Peninsula to San Francisco, Tehachapi Wind Power **Project** (SCE), a conceptual new transmission line from the Tehachapi Mountains toward southern California load centers where the purpose and needs for the line are being evaluated as wind power developers consider their options, and Path 26 (SCE), an upgrade of a transmission line that brings power from the Southern Sierra outside Fresno toward central California load centers. 6 The CPUC will continue to monitor compliance with CEQA conditions on the transmission projects it recently authorized that are still under construction, including Northeast San Jose 230kV Reinforcement Project (PG&E), costing \$148 million and expected to be completed in May, Tri-Valley Capacity Increase Project (PG&E), costing \$118 million and Phase I expected to be completed in May, Mission-Miguel 230kV Transmission Line and Imperial Valley Substation Project (SDG&E), costing \$55 million and estimated completion by 2004.

The CPUC will also evaluate distributed generation – small generation facilities at or near the customer's location – and modernization of existing, aging fossil generating assets as potential infrastructure development for California. The CPUC will initiate a distributed generation rulemaking to refine its policy and value the system benefits and costs of DG. The CPUC is also working with the IOUs to establish criteria whereby actions they take to improve the environmental effects of their generating resources may be rewarded with a higher rate of return. This incentive, under development in the Sustainability Rulemaking, may provide the CPUC with additional tools to encourage the modernization and improvement of California's generation infrastructure.

Sustaining Ongoing Consumer Protections and Programs for Low-income and other Vulnerable Customer Groups.

The CPUC is improving the effectiveness of low-income programs for energy customers. The California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) program offers qualified customers a 20% discount on their gas and electric bills. In 2003, the CPUC is performing a needs assessment and an administrative audit. The CPUC is also conducting an assessment of utility best practices for the recruitment of new participants, and working to implement automatic enrollment into the CARE program.

NATURAL GAS

The CPUC has three primary objectives in the natural gas sector:

- Assuring reasonable natural gas rates
- Matching natural gas capacity to needs
- Maximizing participation in energy efficiency and low income programs

⁶ CPUC review of this line has been placed on hold to allow the ISO more time to complete its evaluation. *CPUC Work Plan 2003*

Assuring Reasonable Natural Gas Rates.

The fundamental issue in the gas sector is assuring reasonable and fair wholesale natural gas prices. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission oversees wholesale natural gas prices, and the CPUC is actively **litigating at the FERC** to expose the factors behind the winter 2000 high prices. Here in California, in 2003, the CPUC is **investigating the gas market activities and impacts on the gas price spikes** experienced at the California border during that 2000-2001 timeframe and this winter.

The CPUC will continue to assure reasonable transmission and distribution rates. The CPUC intends to take a hard look at revenue requirements and cost of service in the upcoming **General Rate Case proceedings**. The CPUC is evaluating the **gas cost incentive mechanisms** to ensure the regulatory framework supports reasonable rates, reliable service and appropriate utility purchasing practices. And the CPUC will establish its policy on firm, tradeable **transmission rights** on the PG&E and Southern California Gas Company systems, as well as set gas **transmission rates** for the PG&E system, in 2003.

Matching Natural Gas Capacity to Needs.

The CPUC is also committed to assuring adequate natural gas capacity both to California from other states and within California. In 2003, the CPUC will update its *2001 Natural Gas Infrastructure Report*, where we proactively assess the IOU gas customer infrastructure needs. The CPUC will also complete its **Interstate Capacity Rulemaking** to ensure adequate contracted interstate natural gas capacity to California on the El Paso Natural Gas Company pipeline system. Finally, CPUC staff will perform **routine inspections** to ensure the safe operation of the systems, and **investigate any gas system accidents or incidents** that may occur.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The CPUC's fundamental priorities in the telecommunication sector are:

- > Improving the scope and reach of universal service programs
- > Ensuring fair prices and high quality service
- Empowering consumers against fraud

Improving the Scope and Reach of Universal Service Programs.

The CPUC promotes universal telephone service. Today, 95% of California households have subscribed to phone service. The CPUC oversees a variety of ratepayer-funded programs to ensure that all Californians have access to essential services at affordable prices, regardless of income, geographic location, or disability. During 2003, the CPUC will prepare to **audit** the \$1.2 billion that supports these telecommunications public purpose programs. The CPUC will work to successfully and seamlessly transition administration of one of these programs, the **Deaf and Disabled**

Telecommunications Program to the State Treasury. The CPUC is also identifying the barriers to deployment of **advanced telecommunications technology**.

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Ensuring Fair Prices and High Quality Service.

For more than five years, consistent with state and federal policy, the CPUC has promoted competition for all telecommunications service, including local service. Where competition is insufficient to protect consumers, the CPUC is prioritizing strict regulation of rates and service quality. Where competition is more developed, the CPUC will act to ensure that all market participants meet basic requirements for service quality and consumer protection. To advance these goals in 2003, the CPUC is closely examining its ratesetting policies for services that are not subject to effective competition in the New Regulatory Framework Rulemaking. The CPUC will establish the network components that incumbent local carriers must provide, under federal requirements, to their competitors – the **unbundled network elements** (UNEs) – and set appropriate prices for those UNEs. Furthermore, the CPUC will closely monitor the quality of service offered by all telecommunications providers, particularly wireline local carriers, where competition alone is insufficient to ensure high quality telephone service for all subscribers, and especially for residential and small business customers. The diminishing availability of phone numbers within existing area codes is also an issue the CPUC will continue to address in 2003, considering impacts on both consumers and competitors of overlaying or splitting codes. Where existing policies and rules permit unreasonable rates or substandard service quality, those policies and rules are being changed.

Empowering Consumers Against Fraud.

To address the growing vulnerability of consumers in the ever more complex and diverse telecommunications market, the CPUC is developing a **consumer bill of rights** to ensure all market participants are held to the same set of standards. The standards will empower consumers with clear and complete information so that they can make informed choices. In addition, the CPUC is **increasing its oversight and prosecutions of consumer fraud**. The CPUC will continue its aggressive efforts to combat slamming (switching service providers without customer consent) and cramming (unauthorized, non-telephone charges on a customer's bill).

California's ability to protect telecommunications consumers, and to ensure a technology neutral policy framework may be undermined in light of efforts underway at the **Federal Communications Commission**. The CPUC will continue to have a strong presence for California in that federal venue and, as necessary, in the courts.

WATER

Our fundamental challenge in the water sector is coping with the costs of tougher water quality standards and infrastructure replacement born by privately-owned companies, while at the same time ensuring that prices remain fair and reasonable for the companies' customers, about 20% of California's water users. In 2003, the CPUC will take these priorities up on a district-by-district basis in water company **General Rate Cases**. The CPUC's five primary priorities for the water sector are:

- > Enforcing water quality requirements
- Water supply planning

- > Improving aging water infrastructure
- Affordability
- Managing increase audit and rate case workload

Enforcing Water Quality Requirements.

The CPUC works closely with the California Department of Health Services (DHS) to enforce water quality requirements in the state. In 2003, the CPUC intends to issue a **Water Quality Rulemaking**. In that proceeding, the Commission will consider what changes in Commission rules and standards should be made and identify long-term and contemporaneous actions that water utilities should be required to take to best ensure the health and safety of utility customers and employees.

The CPUC is also **monitoring the utilities' source water** quality and the physical condition of the system. For example, the CPUC is monitoring the utilities' **Infrastructure Needs Survey** reports to the US EPA and using them for resource planning. The CPUC will continue to be actively involved in assisting the utilities in obtaining **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund** loans for water system upgrades to improve water quality.

Proactive Water Supply Planning.

The costs associated with water availability and treatments are making some supplies uneconomic, and the possibility of a drought always looms in California. The CPUC is **identifying long-term supply options**, like desalinization investments, additional ground water drilling, and surface water options such as storage of excess winter flows in groundwater aquifers. Although Californians use less water per capita than any other western state, the CPUC continues to support and encourage utility efforts in promoting **water conservation**.

Improving Aging Water Infrastructure.

The water infrastructure of California's regulated utilities is aging and, in some cases, is in need of immediate replacement to ensure reliable, safe water service. The capital investments necessary to upgrade water systems pose a challenge. This is especially true when added to the costs of higher contaminant testing and treatment standards. The small water utilities in particular have difficulty coping with infrastructure improvement costs. The CPUC assists utilities in identifying problems and developing solutions, from **supporting economic mergers and sales** of small water companies, to the extreme situations of **petitioning Superior Court** for a receivership to sell, or at least to ensure competent management of those systems whose operators have not or cannot operate them reliably and safely.

For the large water utilities, the CPUC is monitoring their **vulnerability assessments** and 2003 Drinking Water **Infrastructure Needs Survey** to address specific future infrastructure replacements and improved security against threats to the systems.

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Improving Affordability.

With the rising cost of water, the ability of customers to pay is becoming an issue of increased importance. In 2003, CPUC continue to implement **rate relief programs for low income ratepayers**, as provided in PU Code § 739.8.

Managing Increased Audit and Rate Case Workload.

The CPUC will **audit** large (over 1000 service connection) and small water utilities in 2003, focusing on the utilities most in need of an audit, from among the 130 small water systems and 70 districts or larger systems the CPUC regulates.

Assembly Bill 2838 requires that the Commission's ten Class A regulated water utilities file a **General Rate Case** every three years. Because these utilities consist of 64 ratemaking districts, the CPUC's water general rate case workload will increase from an average of seven ratemaking districts per year (over the last five years) to 21 to 22 districts per year, without additional staffing. The CPUC will be opening a **Rate Case Plan Rulemaking** to develop creative and responsible approaches to ensuring timely processing of these general rate cases.

TRANSPORTATION

The CPUC's primary challenge in fulfilling its transportation responsibilities is to:

- Increase the safety of railways
- > Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of licensing duties

Increasing Rail Crossing Safety and Reducing Trespasser Fatalities.

In California, the volume of rail operations is increasing and additional rail service – primarily passenger light rail – is coming on line. More development is occurring close to railroads, which means that more people are living near rail operations. Almost one-fifth of all rail related fatalities in California occur at at-grade crossings where the railroad and roadway intersect. The CPUC supports additional rail service, and is working to reduce rail crossing hazards through review of the design and construction of rail crossings. In 2003, the CPUC will work with new rail line operators to ensure safety, including the soon-to-be-opened Port of Los Angeles Waterfront Red Car Trolley in San Pedro, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Pasadena Gold Line, and the Sacramento Regional Transit District's South Line.

In addition, the CPUC is working to reduce rail crossing hazards on seven systems that are scheduled to be opened in 2004 or later.

The rising number of "trespasser" fatalities (pedestrians illegally walking on rail rights-of-way at other than designated crossings), which comprise 65% of rail related fatalities, is also a key challenge for the CPUC. The CPUC will continue active participation in the **Operation Lifesaver Program**, a national community outreach/education program, and interaction with the Federal Railroad Administration on crossing and trespasser prevention safety.

Finally, the CPUC is participating in a federal government initiative to develop **supplemental safety measures** applicable to areas where locomotive whistles, required by statute to be sounded when approaching rail-highway grade crossings, are a disturbance to nearby residents.

Consumer Protection Through Improved Licensing.

The CPUC's priority regarding motor carrier licensing is assuring safety, financial responsibility, and consumer protection. In 2003, the CPUC continues to work to streamline its licensing process by modernizing its database to accommodate future **online processing of license applications**. This effort and investment will shorten the process time for what are often small business owners and ease the burden on third parties that must submit verification in support of a license, and will expedite the CPUC's verification that carriers comply with safety and driver screening requirements.

COMMISSION-WIDE INITIATIVES

The CPUC is also initiating, in 2003, three efforts of broad interest that are not specific to the industries the agency oversees.

At the request of Governor Davis, the CPUC is establishing an **Office of Economic Development** to insure that the economic, infrastructure and job consequences of CPUC actions are considered in CPUC proceedings and decisions. The Office will conduct outreach to communities of interest, including employers, workers, and local and statewide officials, to identify and promote economic development goals for the State.

In 2003, the CPUC is comprehensively assessing its role in improving workplace **diversity** to improve internal diversity and better influencing utility practices where diversity comes into play. For example, the CPUC is reinvigorating its effectiveness in responding to the needs of non-English-speaking persons that interact with the CPUC, providing PUC information in other languages for print or Website use, addressing diversity issues related to CPUC employment, and improving the Women, Minority, Disabled-Veteran Business Enterprise program covering utility procurement.

With energy services no longer in crisis, the CPUC is assessing its **backlog** of informal filings submitted to the Commission when regulated businesses need CPUC approvals to conduct business or individual consumers need help dealing with regulated companies. The CPUC is implementing actions to reduce and manage that backlog.

How Do Consumers Resolve a Complaint or Get Involved in a CPUC Proceeding?

The Consumer Affairs Branch receives complaints, resolves disputes between customers and utilities, and provides consumer education and enforcement. If you have a question about your telephone, gas, water or electric utility service or bill which you have not been able to resolve with the utility, contact the CPUC Consumer Affairs office at:

CPUC Consumer Affairs Branch 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102 800-649-7570 consumer-affairs@cpuc.ca.gov

The Public Advisor's Office assists consumers by explaining how to file a formal complaint, how to use CPUC procedures, and how to participate in CPUC proceedings.

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THE GUIDE FOR PUC INTERVENORS explains how consumers may participate in the CPUC's formal proceedings and is available from the CPUC Public Advisor's, or on-line at www.cpuc.ca.gov.

How the CPUC is Addressing Its Priorities and Objectives

The attached list of proceedings provides a brief description of some of the major formal proceedings before the CPUC. These proceedings are being highlighted from the 600 active cases the CPUC is processing because they raise issues of broad consumer interest or impact. The proceeding number necessary for quickly obtaining additional information about the case is noted, along with the lead Commissioner responsible for sheparding the case forward to resolution. For those cases expected, but not yet formally filed, less detail is included.